Chinese Communist sources state that Yao people have strictly forbidden their children to intermarry with the Han Chinese since the latter are hated and distrusted by the Yao people.[24] Taking account of the Kuomintang government's desire to assimilate the minorities, and the Communists' exaggeration of minority sufferings under "undemocratic government," the real attitude of the Yao toward the Han Chinese must be somewhere between the two extremes. One must not ignore the fact that the superiority of Han Chinese culture is readily recognized by the Yao people, and this recognition often leads to ready assimilation of the Yao people into Han communities, provided that the latter do not raise too high a barrier against the Yao. The hardships of the Yao people are due to the following conditions detrimental to a prosperous community:

1. Yao peasants have to pay high rent for land under their cultivation; not infrequently, rent runs as high as 70 per cent of the total crop yield.

2. The land under their cultivation is generally low in productivity; consequently, Yao peasants are usually short of food a part of every year. To alleviate the situation, Yao peasants

24. Min-tsu Cheng-t'se Wen-hsien Hui-pien, p. 103. (cited above).

often resort to mortgaging to their landlords the green plants standing in the field for two- or three-tenths of the regular crop price, and thus further aggravate their next year's economic situation. 563 182 [426]

3. Lack of incentive and indulgence in liquor are prevalent in Yao communities and stem from the impossible economic situation in which the peasants find themselves.

Under the Communists, several hsien governments in Kwangsi have started moving Yao people from the mountains to the flat land to clear new land for cultivation or to share agricultural land confiscated from Han and Chuang landlords.[25] However, the Han and Chuang communities on the flat land are probably not very cordial to these immigrant Yao people, for there are cases in which some Yao people, after being given land in Han and Chuang communities, chose to return to their old habitat in the mountains. Recent Chinese Communist news dispatches claim an unusual effort on the part of the Communist cadres to foster friendliness between these ethnic groups.

Yao people have the custom of cultivating each other's fields in groups. This custom is 563 476

25. Jen-min Jih-pao, Peking, March 11, 1950; June 25, 1952.

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varying degrees of wealth of the bureaucratic, agricultural, artisan, or commercial classes. When recruited by the government to study at the imperial academies, scholars were protégés of the government, and were regarded as potential bureaucrats even if they were engaged only in the compilation of historical documents. Certainly the majority of those who devoted their full time to study considered themselves potential bureaucrats. To those who did not cherish the dream of becoming bureaucrats and who had other economic means, education was only an additional sign of their prestige.

The road to status and wealth through education and government service was often bypassed in time of chaos; military skills would enable individuals to obtain high positions in the bureaucracy. But military men seldom won social esteem until they had become cultivated, and such esteem generally accrued to their children, who were given the opportunity by reason of the parents' wealth to acquire learning under the tutelage of well-known scholars.

C. Social Organizations

Social organizations which had no basis in kinship were not recognized as approved parts of the social hierarchy or as approved means for gaining social prominences. However, they would help to supplement relationships which the social order might neglect. The sucess of organizations of this sort served as a disintegrating influence on the existing social system. Most

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of the traditional non-kin social organizations had an economic motivation.

In rural areas, organizations such as the Red Spear Society (Hung-ch'iang Hui) and the Mutual Protection Society (Lien-ya Hui) existed for the protection of the inhabitants against roving bandits. These voluntary associations arose in areas where the government failed to maintain order and peace, and their organization cut across class and occupational lines. When landlords were forced to move into towns during periods of disorder, peasants and tenants would become so powerful that at times they defied the landlords' demand for exorbitant rents.

Among the artisans and workers in China there were for generations both craft builds (hongs) and regional guilds (pongs). As in Europe, these guilds were not intended to serve the interests of workers as a class, but to promote the crafts and guard their monopoly and secrets. Both employers and employees were members, but the employers usually dominated the guilds' activities.[5]

Another kind of association existed to serve travelers, who were usually merchants, in

5. Nym Wales, The Chinese Labor Movement, New York, The John Day Co., 1945, p. 7.

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when he became head of the house. While a man's parents lived, his wife was expected to be more subservient than he toward them. In her mother-in-law, the son's wife more often than not encountered a tyrant. The mother-in-law, rather than her son, governed and judged the actions of the son's wife. 596

B. Social Role

The principle social function of the family in China was the bearing, rearing, and training of children. Sons were more highly valued than daughters, because only the former remained with the family after marriage, contributing to its labor and income, and only sons could perpetuate the family and perform the yearly rites in honor of the father and the family ancestors after the father's death. Implicit in the ceremony was the idea that the ancestors had a life after death, watched over the family's fortune, and were comforted by the periodic ministrations of the family. For the living, the rites provided an occasion for awe and respect during which the continuity of the family over time was reemphasized and the solidarity and duties of the family unit in the present reasserted. 596 182

The veneration of ancestors was so important to Chinese society that the absence of sons to carry on the yearly observances was regarded as a major failing on the responsible male's part and a tremendous catastrophe for the family. Concubinage and adoption were socially and legally sanctioned as means of providing sons, if

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marriage produced only daughters or no children at all. Because of the necessity of providing against a high death rate, the premium on sons resulted in over-population, only partly offset by a high rate of female infanticide. 596 182

Just as sex, age, and generation determined an individual's status within the family, so did these factors determine his behavior and position in the community and the world at large. An additional determinant of his standing was the status of his family in society. 554 596

Authority and dominance were the province of males. Women might, and occasionally did, exercise overt leadership. More frequently, they were the power behind the throne. Such cases were exceptional, however. In modern times at least, supremacy was neither desired by women nor readily admitted to when possessed. 596

Age was honored relatively and absolutely. Long life automatically gave its possessor higher standing in the community, but whatever age he attained, he was to show respect to his elders and members of an older generation. In the society of traditional China, age implied the accumulation of wisdom and experience vital to society in times of decision or crisis. 888

Individual status also improved with education, more particularly with the attainment of a degree in the official examinations and appointment to official position. An individual's educational or official career was usually dependent 554 596

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acre for each person.[1] Farm families save everything; fecal matter and refuse go into a pit, which also serves to feed the family pig, and at the time of spring fertilizing the material from the pit is mixed with topsoil and spread on the fields. Grass and grainstalks are carefully husbanded to be used as fuel for cooking and, rarely, for heating the house. Cloth is scarce and clothing is worn until it falls apart; after that the rags are used to make the soles of cloth shoes. The shortage of wood for all purposes has long been acute, and farm buildings are made of pounded earth, mud bricks and, in the rice region, of bamboo lathe and mud plaster. Floors are of earth, and only the dwellings of the wealthier farmers have glass windows. The dominant fact of life in the Chinese countryside is poverty. This has grown steadily worse during the last hundred years as factory-made goods destroyed village handicrafts, usury and tenancy increased, wars and ineffectual governments brought disruption and oppression, and overpopulation lowered the standard of living. "The most bankrupt countryside in Asia is the Chinese. The worst crisis of over-population China has yet had to face has been accompanied by a breakdown of traditional ideas and traditional authority so complete as to lead to a state of near anarchy."[2]

The characteristic way of life of the peasants has

1. George B. Cressey, Asia's Lands and Peoples, New York, 1944, p. 87. Cressey cites C. C. Chang "An Estimate of China's Land and Crops," Nanking, 1932; Cressey, p. 88: "...an average farm family of 6.2 persons must obtain its entire livelihood from a farm of 4.18 acres of which but 3.76 acres are actually in crops."

2. Maurice Zinkin, Asia and the West, London, 1951, p. 111.

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been slowly disintegrating under manifold pressures. In prosperous periods in the past a delicate balance of human and economic factors fostered a crowded, conformist, but on the whole, harmonious village life. Recent decades have seen the old harmony replaced by tension and a predatory struggle for survival. And, despite the isolation of most villages, ideas and ideals from the West have slowly undermined the authority of the older mores and customary laws.

Despite all the fissures that have developed, it is well to remember that peasant life everywhere has a tremendous inertia, that it is incredibly resistant to all the forces of change. Thus, much of the sweeping change that occurred in city life under comparable pressures did not occur in the peasant villages.

The main economic and social unit of the village is the family, and a special study is devoted to that subject. Here we shall sketch the rhythm of village life and something of its annual cycle of activity.

The New Year holiday, for the people of China the first fifteen days of the year, is the main period of leisure for the villagers. Food is prepared in advance, and even the women may rest from their cooking during the first five days of the holiday. The town is decorated with nien-hua (New Year's pictures) and ch'un-lien (paired New Year's Day mottoes). Visiting friends and relatives, gambling, eating the best food of the year, wearing the best clothes, and indulging the children make this the most festive period of the year. For many families it is the only time in the year when they can afford to eat meat dishes. The